

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 4923

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG PFOR TH

SUBJECT: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS: INFORMATION ON THAILAND

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SUMMARY: THIS TELEGRAM CONTAINS THE INFORMATION REQUESTED IN
REF C. BANGKOK DESIGNATES POLITICAL COUNSELOR THOMAS F. CONLON
AS MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS OFFICER. END SUMMARY

1. THE FOLLOWING SUB-PARAGRAPHS ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN PARA
7 REF C.

A. THAILAND'S PRIMARY MULTILATERAL INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES IN
1976 WILL FOCUS LARGELY ON THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN
NATIONS. THIS FOCUS PERTAINS BOTH TO ASEAN'S EFFORTS TO
COMPLETE ITS INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND TO ASEAN'S ROLE AS A BLOC
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IN THE WIDER MULTILATERAL ARENA. BEYOND ASEAN, THAILAND HAS

EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN ATTENDING THE COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE IN AUGUST (REF D) AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO WIDEN ITS THIRD WORLD ASSOCIATIONS WHEN AND AS IT BECOMES MORE WELCOME IN THESE FORA. THAILAND HAS ALSO SOLICITED USG SUPPORT FOR THAI AMBASSADOR (TO JAPAN) DR. SOMPONG SUCHARITKUL'S CANDIDACY TO THE ASIAN VACANCY ON THE INTERNATIONAL LAW COMMISSION (REFS E AND F).

(B)(QL ASEAN: THAILAND'S CHIEF EXTERNAL INFLUENCE ON MULTILATERAL POLICY-MAKING IS UNQUESTIONABLY ASEAN. TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, THE ASEAN COUNTRIES COORDINATE A COMMON POSITION ON THE ISSUES AT HAND IN ALL INTERNATIONAL FORA WHERE THEY SHARE COMMON PARTICIPATION. THAILAND, AT THE SAME TIME, INFLUENCES THE ASEAN POLITION-DETERMINING PROCESS.

(2) G-77: THAILAND BELONGS TO THE GROUP OF 77, BUT RANKS CONSIDERABLY ABOVE THE AVERAGE IN TERMS OF PER CAPITA INCOME. IT IS THUS LESS PRONE TO TAKE SOME OF THE EXTREME G-77 POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES.

(3) COMMODITY PRODUCERS GROUPS: TIN AND RUBBER ARE MAJOR FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNERS FOR THAILANDM THE WORLD PRICE AND MARKET CONDITIONS FOR THESE COMMODITIES ARE, THEREFORE, OF KEY IMPORTANCE TO THE RTG. THAILAND CUSTOMARILY FALLS RIGHT IN LINE WITH THE OTHER MAJOR PRODUCERS ON SUCH ISSUES AS U.S. STOCKPILE RELEASES. THAILAND IS ALSO THE WORLD'S SECOND LARGEST (AFTER THE U.S.) EXPORTER OF RICE. PROBLEMS HERE, HOWEVER, ARE MORE A BILATERAL THAI/ U.S. ISSUE AND SELDOM INVOLVE ANY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

(4) MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONSC THAILAND WILL BE TRYING TO OBTAIN UNIMPEDED ACCESS TO THE U.S. MARKET FOR THAI TEXTILES AND GARMETS. ITS OTHER MAIN CONCERN WILL BE TO MAINTIAIN, AND HOPEFULLY TO BROADEN, THE CATEGORY OF TROPICAL PRODUCTS AND THE PREFERENCES GIVEN TO THOSE PRODUCTS. THAILAND'S BASIC TRADE POLICY IS LIBERAL, AND IN PRACTICE IS COMPATIBLE WITH GATT OBJECTIVES, EVEN THOUGH THAILAND IS OT A MEMBER OF GATT. (SEE REF G.)

(C) (1) INSTRUCTIONS: THE SPECIFICITY OF RTG INSTRUCTIONS TO ITS DELEGATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL FORA DEPENDS CONSIDERABLY ON MFA'S CONFIDENCE IN THE DELEGATE IN QUESTION, AND THE DIRECTIMPORTANCE TO THAILAND OF THE ISSUES(S)
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AT HAND. IN SOME CASES, MFA WILL INSTRUCT THE DELEGATE EXACTLY HOW TO VOTE; IN OTHERS HE MAY BE TOLD TO CONCERT WITH HIS ASEAN COLLEAGUES AND VOTE WITH THEM. TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, WHENEVER THE EMBASSY HAS WEIGHED IN HEAVILY ON A MULTILATERAL ISSUE, MFA HAS AT LEAST CONVEYED THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR DEMARCHE TO ITS DELEGATE, BUT OUR INTEREST HAS NOT ALWAYS CARRIED THE DAY.

(2) CONTROL AND REPORTING: AS ONE WOULD EXPECT, THAILAND'S

TELECOMMUNICATIONS WITH ITS DELEGATIONS ABROAD ARE NOT AS RAPID OR CONVENIENT AS OUR OWN SYSTEMS. THIS SITUATION TENDS TO LIMIT THE RAPID EXCHANGES OF REPORTING AND INSTRUCTIONS THAT WE TAKE FOR GRANTED. WE ARE NOT, HOWEVER, AWARE OF ANY RECENT INSTANCE IN WHICH A THAI DELEGATE FAILED TO REPORT SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS, VIOLATED HIS INSTRUCTIONS, OR OTHERWISE FAILED TO LIVE UP TO HIS GOVERNMENT'S EXPECTATIONS OF HOW HE SHOULD LOBBY OR VOTE.

(D) THAILAND'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES ABROAD DO NOT HAVE THE AUTONOMOUS POLITICAL POSITION DESCRIBED IN PARA 7 (D), REF C. VIRTUALLY ALL ARE NOW CAREER FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY ARE INDIVIDUALLY INFLUENTIAL WITHIN MFA (IN MUCH THE SAME WAY THAT MANY U.S. REPRESENTATIVES ARE), AND HAVE AN UNDOUBTED ROLE IN SHAPING THEIR OWN INSTRUCTIONS. THEY MIGHT ALSO ASK FOR, AND RECEIVE, AUTHORITY TO DECIDE ON THE SPOT WHAT TO DO, PROBABLY IN CONCERT WITH THEIR ASEAN COLLEAGUES.

(3)(1) RECEPTIVITY: THE U.S. /THAI BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP HAS LONG BEEN CLOSE IN MANY ASPECTS. THE RTG IS, THEREFORE, USUALLY WILLING TO HEAR OUT U.S. REPRESENTATIVES ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES. AT THE SAME TIME, AND IN THE WAKE OF THE DEBACLE IN INDO-CHINA IN 1975, THAILAND WISHES TO PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN ITSELF AND THE U.S. AND ESTABLISH AT LEAST AN APPEARANCE OF CHARTING ITS OWN COURSE DIPLOMATICALLY. THIS WISH PERTAINS TO THAILAND'S BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE PRC AND THE SOVIET UNION, AND ESPECIALLY WITH THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES OF INDOCHINA. MULTILATERALLY, IT PERTAINS TO THAILAND'S PARTICIPATION IN ASEAN AND THE G-77, AND EVENTUALLY PROBABLY ALSO THE NAC OR OTHER THIRD WORLD CONFABS. U.S. INTEREST IN AN ISSUE IS NO LONGER SUFFICIENT TO SWAY THE RTG WHEN ITS OWN DIPLOMATIC IMPERATIVES ARE

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DIFFERENT. THAILAND'S DAYS AS A COMPLAISANT CLIENT OF THE U.S. ARE OVER.

(2) MULTILATERAL ISSUES VERSUS BILATERAL RELATIONS: IN THE REALM OF COMPETING PRIORITIES BETWEEN MULTILATERAL ISSUES AND BILATERAL RELATIONS, THE SHOE IS VERY MUCH ON THE OTHER FOOT HERE. IN MANY AREAS -- THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND, COOPERATION ON NARCOTICS MATTERS, AND SOME BILATERAL ECONOMIC ISSUES (ESPECIALLY THAI/U.S. COMPETITION IN ASIAN RICE MARKETS) -- U.S. MUST BE SENSITIVE TO THE SHIFTING THAI PERCEPTION OF PRIORITIES. NOT ONLY HAVE WE LITTLE "LEVERAGE" IN THESE AREAS, BUT OUR INTENSE DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES IN WHICH THE U.S. AND THAILAND HAVE DIVERGENT PRIORITIES (I.E. KOREA) HAS ON OCCASION CONSUMED CONSIDERABLE DIPLOMATIC CAPITAL.

(3) THAI SOLICITATION OF USG SUPPORT: THAILAND IS NOT
GENERALLYU A MOVER AND SHAKER IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. IT
WOULD WELCOME DISCREET USG SUPPORT FOR ASEAN DEVELOPMENT,
FOR SUPPORT OF ASEAN POSITIONS ON SUCH MATTERS AS THE
SOUTHEAST ASIAN ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY AND
THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE. THIS RECEPTIVITY
CUSTOMAR-
ILY CONSISTS OF EXPRESSING ITS OWN POLICY ON THESE
MATTERS, AND REQUESTING U.S. UNDERSTANDING OF THE THAI
POSITION. THE RTG RARELY FAILS TO SOLICIT U.S.
SUPPORT FOR THAI INDIVIDUAL CANDIDACIES FOR APPOINTMENT
TO INTERNATIONAL COMMISSIONS AND BODIES.
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